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NEGRO PROBLEM

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The Negro Problem

By Rev. Dr. Joseph E. Roy

Western Field Secretary, American Missionary Association

It is a problem in Christian sociology. We have now had a third of a century upon it, and how far along have we come toward its solution? Let us take up the process of cancellation.

1. We first cancel out the dying-off process. Soon after the war I met men at the South who, with an ill-concealed chuckle averred that Providence was solving the question for us by the death rate among the freed people. Indeed, the health report statistics which they presented, especially of deaths in the cities, whether these people had flocked, were startling enough. And this state of the case still obtains. Dr. G. W. Hubbard, dean of the Colored Mehary Medical College of the M. E. Church, Nashville, Tenn., has reported recently that "the latest vital statistics of the principal cities and towns of the South show that the death rate of the colored population is nearly twice as great as that among the whites." And this death rate the dean says comes from preventable diseases and is owing to the ignorance of the laws of health and lack of proper care in sickness. To these causes must be added the destitution and exposure of the people directly after the war and since. But the fact remains that the last census shows the colored people to have nearly doubled in number since the war. The large percentage of deaths among children in the cities of the South is no more than is common among the children of the very poor in the cities of the North. It is a strong argument for the training of colored physicians that, as Dr. Hubbard says, "In Nashville, where there is probably a greater number of colored physicians in proportion to the population than in any other southern city, the death rate has decreased nearly 40 percent among the colored people during the past twenty years."

2. We next cancel out the element of miscegenation. Not long after the war, under the shadow of Maryville College in Tennessee, a Presbyterian minister told me that he had written a book to show that this was the true solution of the negro problem. Last summer a federal judge from one of the territories, a native of Maryland, told Dr. M. E. Striely and myself, as we were resorting at Mackinaw, that, in his judgment, this mixing of the races was to be the way out of our negro question. He spoke dispassionately and from his life-long observation at the South. Nor was he afraid of that result. If the abolitionists had only let slavery alone there would have been much more prospect for such a solution. Prof. Crogman, a graduate of Atlanta University, for many years a professor in the Clark University (M. E.) of that city, an eloquent speaker said before an A. M. A. anniversary, referring to this whitening of his people: "It is getting

so that you can hardly tell among some of us where them leaves off and Ham begins." In the slave times a book was published in the South, showing the extent of this amalgamation. But my Presbyterian friend told me that he could not find any publisher who would take his book, and moreover, that he himself had changed his mind as to the theory of his solvent. The most of the Southern states, now by law forbid such intermarriage. The workers in the mission schools of the South find a diminution in the fruits of such mixed parentage. Bishop Haygood said that when a colored woman could testify in court who the father of her bastard child was, it made a great deal of difference.

3. We cancel out colonization. Settle them in some state or territory by themselves, some have said. So the U. S. government undertook to solve the Indian problem, by transferring the tribes to the Indian Territory. But that settlement did not settle the question. Then in the case of the negroes we have no such virgin territory in which to locate them; and if we had, they would not go; and if they should consent to go, we should need several states to hold their eight millions; and if they should take the needed states of the South, what would become of the whites? They are as fond of their climate and their "section" as are the blacks.

4. We cancel out expatriation. Send them to Africa, some have said. The argument against the Old Colonization Society was never answered, that the navies of the world could not ship the increase of the slave population. It would be expatriation. This is the Afro-American's country as much as it is the Anglo-American's. They are as much attached to it as their neighbors, the whites. They love it now all the more as having given them their citizenship in addition to that high civilization in which they have grown up. The question was discussed by colored men in the World's Congress on Africa during the Columbian Exposition, and the argument and the personal preference were overwhelmingly on the side of remaining in their native land. Bishop Turner stands alone among their leaders. Laboring colored men have no business to go to Africa. The natives will live cheaper than they can. By and by, as they shall have gotten capital and the professions and skill in managing affairs, let them go and locate in colonies, like those of Galesburg and of Grinnell, and so radiate Christian civilization while building up their own society and helping Ethiopia to stretch out her hands unto God. But if it be conceded that the two peoples cannot live together down there, as Secretary S. P. Woodbury argues, which one shall be expatriated? Must it be the one which has loved its country so much that the horrors of slavery could not drive it into rebellion, but which freely shed its blood to save the life of the nation and not to destroy it?

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W. H. H.

THE WILMINGTON TROUBLES.

THEIR ORIGIN EXPLAINED BY THE REV. PEYTON H. HOGE.

PROMINENT PRESBYTERIAN CLERGYMAN OF THE TOWN PRESENTS THE TOWN'S PEOPLE'S PREDICAMENT.

To the Editor of The Tribune.

Sir: The evident spirit of fairness manifested in your recent editorial on the troubles in Wilmington is highly appreciated here, and for one I thank you for it. The solution which you suggest is the solution that I have long advocated, but it is one very difficult to apply, and for this reason: White men, even when illiterate, do to a certain extent think for themselves, and to that extent are qualified voters. The negroes have never learned to think for themselves, or if they do, they are afraid to act according to their convictions. You will find many men—old men—in the mountains and swamp regions of this State who are recognized as men of good sense and intelligence, whose children and grandchildren are educated, but who could not stand the educational test that a servant negro child could pass. But which is the best qualified voter?

Again, you are in error in supposing that we have done nothing to fit the negro for the use of the ballot, if education will fit him. In this county the whites pay over 90 per cent of the taxes, and yet 65 per cent of the school fund goes to the support of the negro schools. The State has established a normal school and an agricultural and mechanical college for the negroes, not to speak of the school for the deaf, dumb and blind, and others that are more on the order of charities. There are numerous schools for higher education established among us by Northern philanthropy, but welcomed and encouraged by our people.

In spite of all this, the negro is as far from being fitted for the ballot as he was thirty years ago—that is to say, his ballot is not governed by his convictions and by the principles that govern him in other affairs. During the last few months they have told their employers here by the hundred that they did not want to vote, that they preferred the rule of the white citizens to what they had been having, but that they simply could not stand the pressure. Some said that they had been threatened with shooting, others with having their houses burned; others said their wives would leave them, while still others said they had been threatened with being turned out of the church. A meeting of "colored ladies" published resolutions that no young man who failed to vote for the continuance of the recent régime should visit their daughters. Every Northern Republican who has attended a National convention knows that the corruptible element of his party, and the constant menace to the integrity of its conventions, is the element from the Southern States.

grove vote as a unit. The... for no Anglo-Saxon communities... the face of the earth has been found that will submit to the rule of an inferior race. That is a fact, whatever may be our theories.

We come back then to the problem. In itself it presents no difficulties. There is sufficient intelligence and capacity among the whites to govern the negroes in far larger proportion. A firm of two men with a corps of 500... govern a cotton compass employing 550 negroes with perfect ease and the greatest efficiency. The headquarters of one of the best-managed railroad systems in the South are here, where there is a similar disproportion between the white and colored force. But these institutions are not conducted on the principle of universal suffrage. There is where the difficulty comes in.

How then has the problem been solved—so far as it has been solved?

First—Let it be remembered that in the State at large the whites are largely in the majority. When this majority came into possession of the State government—after the days of reconstruction—it addressed itself to the relief of the people of the East, where the negroes were in the majority. The methods used were two. One involved the giving up of local self-government, the other a gerrymander. For the counties a government was devised in which magistrates were appointed by the Legislature, and these magistrates elected county commissioners. This government was efficient, and in the main satisfactory. But it was not self-government.

The other was less satisfactory in its working. I will describe it as it existed in Wilmington. The central part of the city was divided into three wards, in which the whites were in the majority. The outlying belt was divided into two wards—almost solidly negro. Each ward elected two Aldermen, giving a Board of ten, of which six were elected by the whites. This Board elected the Mayor.

The working of the system was bad. As the Aldermen were themselves eligible to the Mayoralty, when the six Aldermen representing the whites met in caucus it was only necessary for one of them to be able to get the votes of three others to be elected Mayor. It was too pretty an opportunity to be lost for ring rule. But all discontent by the better element was met by the fact—or the threat—of negro rule as the alternative.

This has been one of the worst evils of negro suffrage in the South. Independent voting—a salutary check on conventions elsewhere—has been impossible here. One must either take the nominee of the party machine or take negro rule.

Well, four years ago we began to take the alternative. The fusion between the Populists and the Republicans gave them the majority of the Legislature, and the Governor of North Carolina has no veto. A very remarkable bill was passed for the government of Wilmington, continuing in office, without a re-election, the existing Board of Aldermen, but taking from the Board the control of the police, which was put in the hands of a newly created Police Board, appointed by the Fusion majority. They began the appointment of negro policemen.

Two years later the Fusionists again carried the State, this time...

ing at the corners emboldened them to crime. They soon found that nothing was done about it. They became especially violent in the motor-cars last summer in which houses were not broken into. Women were insulted in the streets or pushed from the sidewalks. Children were beaten. Young girls were addressed with the vilest language. Profanity and vulgarity were heard at every corner and in the streets. The efforts of the motor-men and conductors to stop it made them the object of special hatred and streetcars were stoned and fired into at night.

The ill-effects of the burning of the white men inspired them with self-optimism. Threats became open of what they were going to do. The women were especially violent. "We have the children were prepared, they said, with "kerozene and matches." They were getting arms from every possible source, and were known to be drilling in their society halls and in the woods.

Under these conditions the white men armed and organized to be prepared for any emergency. The organization was by blocks. The efforts of the chairman of the block were reported to higher officers. The number of white men in their blocks and what arms they had. Signals were arranged upon which they were to take the women and children of their blocks to a place of safety. But a great many sent their families out of town.

Then the citizens by private subscription purchased a rapid-fire gun. It is believed that this fact and an exhibition of its effectiveness broke the backbone of the negro organization.

PREPARING FOR THE ELECTION.

Meanwhile the election was coming on. The determination of the white people not to submit to the continuance of these conditions was becoming intense. Old party relations were forgotten, and Republicans and Populists vied with Democrats in their assertion of the necessity of white supremacy. The Chamber of Commerce, whose president was a Republican, adopted strong resolutions as to the necessity for the salvation of the city of restoring white government. Still, the leaders of the negroes seemed determined to test the matter at the polls.

A number of influential business men, dreading the consequences of an election under such conditions, wrote to the Governor who is also the head of the local Republican organization, imploring him not to allow a Republican local ticket to be run. He agreed to meet a delegation. The writer was one of a nonpartisan committee who went to see the Governor to secure a peaceful solution. The mission was successful. He agreed that the Republicans would put up no ticket for county officers and they pledged their efforts to the protection of the exercise of their right of suffrage for State and National officers. The agreement was kept. The negroes polled a full vote without interference.

AN IMPOTENT CITY GOVERNMENT.

The county government was thus placed in the hands of the white people without opposition, but the city government, which was the great evil, had until next May to continue in office. Its utter impotence to maintain order had been completely demonstrated a few days before the election. On Friday some drunken white men had maltreated some negroes; they were arrested and, by the aid of white men, fined. The following night a negro stoned a streetcar. He was arrested, but a mob of three hundred negroes assembled to resist his arrest. The Mayor could not be found, and the Chief of Police refused to go to the assistance of his own officers, and their lives were saved only by the energetic action of some white men.

Such was the condition of affairs when on Wednesday, the 9th, a mass-meeting was held to consider the situation. They decreed that Manly must leave the city and "The Record" press be shipped away in twenty-four hours. People will, of course, have their own opinion about the wisdom and propriety of this. I am only relating facts. It was considered by nearly every one here essential to the good order of the community.

The meeting was also asked to "go over and clear up the City Hall." Instead, the meeting adopted a resolution requesting the Mayor to resign, since they had shown inability to preserve order, and appointed to do what was required by the two resolutions. They put the first matter in the hands of thirty-two representative negroes, and received no answer in the time specified.

ned, they proceeded to the spot with some vol- teers and destroyed the press. Just when and whom it was decided to destroy it instead of shipping it away, as called for by the resolutions have never learned. It was doubtless then necessary as an object-lesson to the negroes. The burning of the building was denounced at the time as the work of a miscreant, and there are two opinions about it.

Let it be understood that this paper was not burned because it was a negro paper. There have been negro papers here ever since I have known the place, and they have been largely sustained

standers upon white women—especially the widows and daughters of the poor.

Wisely or unwisely, the work was done. No negro had lifted a hand, and not a drop of blood had been shed. People had returned to their business, and the city had almost resumed its usual aspect, when suddenly about two hours afterwards a mile and a half from "The Record" office alarm was given that the negroes in the Brookly quarter of the city across a deep railroad where they outnumbered the whites many times were killing the whites. Reinforcements were rapidly over, but they found the negroes already in the run.

The military orders having now come from Governor—proceeded to the spot with the rapidity. Just as they reached the scene they saw some negroes shoot at them and began into a hot. The colonel gave them two minutes to surrender. They all surrendered but one, who ran and was shot. There were one or two others killed afterward under similar conditions. But most of the casualties occurred in the first running fight. That it was begun by the negroes is certain. That many cent negroes suffered is also certain. That many were not killed was due to the organization of the whites and the coolness of their leaders. There is a violent element among us, as there is in every community, and they were at white heat on long courses of injuries and insults. There was government to restrain them, and a mob that tasted blood is much like a wild beast.

ORDER RESTORED.

It was the citizens' organization that restored order, that protected the negroes, that escorted workmen to their homes, and that stood on guard all that night. That is the meaning of the fact that has been made so much of in papers at a distance that even ministers of the Gospel shouldered guns and stood guard—a fact for which many a humane man may give thanks.

Meanwhile the city government, that had already agreed to vacate, was begging for permission to do so. As soon as order had been restored the mission was given. The citizens' committee named a Board of Aldermen, and the old Board resigned at a time, the remainder electing his successor from the committee's list. Thus the Board never without a quorum, and the change was legally made. The new Board sunrise the Mayor and a Chief of Police, and all the military in the morning the citizens' guards were discharged, the government was given, and since then we have had as quiet and orderly a town as you would wish to see.

But how can we keep it so? That is the problem. Cannot some of the surplus wisdom of the land that is thirsting for wider spheres for stamanship among Cubans, Hawaiians and Tahitians take hold of this problem and solve it? For some of us recognize that it will never be solved permanently unless it is solved righteously.

PEYTON H. HOG
Wilmington, N. C., Nov. 12, 1898.

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